

For Immediate Release  
October 27, 2006

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**Busy Bee Congress**  
**by Senator Larry Craig**

As October wraps up and November gets underway, the days are numbered for the second session of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, and they are growing few. It's hard to predict what will happen in the last week or so of the session, but if we look back over the last two years, we can see that Congress has already accomplished quite a lot.

One of the achievements of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress that I'm most proud of is the Energy Policy Act of 2005, also known as the Energy Bill. It was legislation that was sorely needed and long overdue. Some point to the high energy prices of today and say the Energy Bill was a failure. But the Energy Bill contains long-term solutions which are just now starting to take hold. The reality is that today's predicament was several years in the making – it didn't happen overnight, nor will it be solved overnight.

Even so, progress is already visible. Two years ago, there was only one nuclear reactor on the drawing board in the United States. Because of the Energy Bill, there are now more than 30 in the works, and construction will begin on several within the next few years. We are now standing up a new ethanol distillery in the United States every two weeks, on average. The law includes incentives for oil and natural gas drilling and exploration, as well as research and development of hydrogen fuel cells and other kinds of alternative energy. Our economy needs an abundant energy supply if it is to grow, and the Energy Policy Act gets the United States back in the business of producing all forms of energy again.

Of course, we cannot forget the United States remains at war with radical Islamic fundamentalism. That's why Congress approved a defense appropriations bill which provides \$436 billion to give our men and women in uniform the training and tools they need to be successful at home and abroad. And if a servicemember is wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan, the Wounded Warrior insurance program – which I introduced in the Senate and got approved in a matter of weeks – provides \$25,000 to \$100,000 to them and their families, to help cover costs while they are in recovery or rehabilitation.

On the homefront, Congress and President Bush approved, and I supported, reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act, because it gives law enforcement the tools they need to fight the threat of those terrorists who may be in our midst. However, I made sure several changes were added to the law, so our civil liberties are not sacrificed in the pursuit of terror suspects.

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Another part of securing our homeland is controlling our borders, and I was happy to support the Secure Fence Act. The Department of Homeland Security will now build 700 miles of fence along the U.S. border with Mexico and deploy cameras, sensors and other technology. Whether it is a real or virtual fence, it will help the Border Patrol to focus its resources more effectively along the border.

There were many more accomplishments that I know are important to the people of Idaho. President Bush nominated, and the Senate confirmed, two conservative judges to the U.S. Supreme Court: Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito. These two men understand that Congress and the state legislatures, not the courts, write the laws.

I also worked hard to enact the Protection of the Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, to cut off baseless, predatory lawsuits and restore the concept of responsibility to our legal system. To bolster our Second Amendment rights, I helped add language to the Homeland Security Appropriations bill, recently signed into law, to prevent the confiscation of firearms from law-abiding gunowners by the federal government during a natural disaster or emergency, when they could be needed most.

Congress also extended a number of tax relief measures and made changes to the Alternative Minimum Tax, which threatened thousands of middle class families with brutally high tax rates. Because of this tax relief, working families are keeping more of what they rightfully earned, and combined with falling gas prices, this economy is only getting stronger.

These are just a few accomplishments of this Congress, as we work to address the challenges facing the people we represent. In such a small space, there really are too many good things to mention. That's why I'll be back before long with another list of accomplishments that apply directly to Idaho.